

The Knowledge Bank at The Ohio State University

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The Honor System in the Department of Electrical Engineering

F. Robert Segna, E.E. III

The idea originated in Junior Electrical Engineering Class in latter part of the Winter Quarter, 1941, after the Board of Trustees of the University had passed the new ruling on administration of examinations. The fact that this caused a lot of red tape and indicated a direct mistrusting of the honor of students in the class irritated both the students and professors alike.

In view of the fact that the Honor System is now in use in many of the other Big Ten schools and is operated by the students themselves in these schools, certain professors of the Department of Electrical Engineering suggested in their classes that this scheme could be carried out in this Department. Immediately, the students adopted this idea and the next day one of the students (Murray Bevis) drew up a petition to the Board of Trustees requesting that the students be permitted to set up and control their own honor system.

All the Juniors and Seniors in the E. E. Dept. signed this petition and it was given to Dean MacQuigg. Several days later, a meeting was called by Professor Dreese, Chairman of the E. E. Department, and here Dean MacQuigg gave his wholehearted approval to the idea.

It was decided to elect a student council consisting of 3 juniors and 3 seniors to administer this system. These were elected by the students of the Department themselves in an open election and they immediately drew up a code of rules for the honor system by which the students agreed to abide.

This system applies primarily to examinations. The students assemble in their class at the designated time

and the instructor distributes the examination questions to the students. He then leaves the class-room and can do some of his other work instead of standing guard over the students like a policeman. The students proceed to take their exam themselves without any aid or cooperation. If any student is seen copying by another student, the second student taps his pencil on the desk and everyone looks up; if this does not work, the student is reported to the elected council. If he refuses to cooperate, it can be carried to the Chairman of the Department or the Dean who may proceed to expel the student from school if necessary. This latter action is rather drastic and is not expected to be used but it can be taken if necessary. Invariably, a warning from the student council will make the student exercise his selfcontrol and stop cheating. It is this system of honor conducted among the students themselves that makes this system so successful. It is democracy in action.

So far (All Winter Quarter) there has been no instances of cheating in the classes of E. E. reported to the student council and from personal observation in these exams, I have not perceived any instance of copying or the like. The Professors say that the grades run almost the same as usual, and they are very well pleased with the system so far.

At the end of each exam, a pledge reading somewhat as follows: "I have not received, given, or perceived any aid during this exam" with a line below it for the student's signature is enclosed. The student signs this as his honor pledge to the professor.

This constitutes the essential highlights of the system in the E. E. Dept. but does not show the entire expansion or potentialities of the system.

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